

Follow these septic system  
**DO's and DON'TS !!!**

DO'S	DON'TS
Conserve water	Overload system
Substitute for bleach and ammonia cleaners	Flush medicines and hazardous materials down drain
Plant grass on drainfield	Plant deep rooted plants near tank or drainfield
Know location of all system components	Park, drive on, or allow animals access to drainfield
Perform periodic septic system maintenance and inspections	Wait until there is a problem before inspecting your septic system

**Don't Flush Household Hazardous Waste!**  
Visit the [Household Hazardous Waste website](#) for the drop-off location nearest to you!

Or call 1-800-732-9253



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Washington County Environmental Health**  
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Email: [EnvironmentalHealth@co.washington.or.us](mailto:EnvironmentalHealth@co.washington.or.us)  
Visit: <https://www.co.washington.or.us/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/OnsiteSewage/index.cfm>

**Why You Care About  
Your Septic System**

**Protect Your Investment**

It is typically much cheaper to properly maintain a working septic system than it is to repair or replace a failing septic system.

**Protect Community Health**

Septic system owners, their neighbors, and the surrounding community run the risk of coming into contact with harmful bacterial and viral pathogens when septic systems are not properly maintained.

**Protect Drinking Water**

Septic systems that are not working properly can contaminate groundwater sources. More than 70% of all Oregonians are at least partially dependent on groundwater for their drinking water supplies!

**Protect Environment**

Septic systems that are not working properly can contaminate surface waters, which disrupts natural systems and impairs aquatic and riparian life.

Be  
Septic  
Smart



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

What every  
**HOMEOWNER** needs to know about **SEPTIC**



# Your Septic System... is Your Responsibility!

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Septic systems are designed to collect and purify the water that goes down the drains in your home. There are two main parts to a conventional septic system.

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## 1) Septic Tank

The septic tank is a watertight container buried in the ground. It is designed to collect all of the sewage that comes from your home. For example, every time you flush a toilet, or do a load of laundry, you are sending sewage to your septic tank. When sewage enters the septic tank, the solids sink to the bottom of the tank (sludge) and oils float to the top of the tank (scum). All of the liquid between the sludge and scum layers is called wastewater. Once the tank is full, wastewater flows from the septic tank to the drainfield.

## 2) Drainfield

The drainfield, also called leach field, typically consists of a series of trenches that sit below the ground. These trenches are filled with a porous material and covered with soil. Wastewater from the septic tank flows into the trenches. Microbes then treat the wastewater, as it moves down through the soil profile below the trenches.

Microbes are responsible for treating your waste!

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The microbes are doing *their* job, but what can *you* do to keep your system working properly? Follow these guidelines for Operation and Maintenance of your septic system.

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### Operation:

The first step in keeping your septic system working is to make sure that you and your family are *using* it properly. Of course, *never* flush materials that are hard to decompose down your drains. For example, cigarette butts, hair and food scraps are not septic friendly! Check out a list of DO'S and DON'TS for septic systems on the back of this brochure!

### Maintenance:

Your septic system will need periodic maintenance even when you and a healthy microbial population are doing the job properly. Having periodic septic system inspections can help to save you thousands of dollars in expensive repairs or even system replacement!

Visit :

<http://www.oregon.gov/deq/Residential/Pages/Septic-Smart.aspx>

and

[www.epa.gov/owm/septic](http://www.epa.gov/owm/septic)

to learn more about being **SEPTIC SMART!**

## Follow These Important Guidelines!

- Know where all of your septic system components are located.

This is a crucial first step in proper septic system maintenance. Schedule an "Existing System Evaluation" with a certified [Onsite Wastewater Inspector\\*](#) if you do not know where the septic tank, distribution lines and drainfield are located.

- Check for sludge and scum levels in your septic tank.

When the bottom of the scum layer is within 6 inches of the bottom of the outlet tee, or the top of the sludge layer is within 12 inches of the bottom of the outlet tee, your tank needs to be pumped. You can measure this yourself, or you can hire a certified **Onsite Wastewater Inspector** to check it for you.

- Have regular septic system inspections completed by a certified **Onsite Wastewater Inspector**.

Typical gravity-fed systems should be inspected at least every three years. Alternative treatment technology systems (ATTs) and sand filter systems should be inspected every year\*\*.

\*Find Inspectors at <http://www.oregon.gov/deq/Residential/Pages/Onsite-Certification.aspx>

\*\***Owners** of ATT and sand filter systems, installed after Jan. 1, 2014, *must* maintain a Service Contract with a certified maintenance provider. The maintenance provider must inspect the system at least once every year and submit a report and required fees to the DEQ.